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In the Beginning.

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ADDENDA.

For the second paragraph on page 7 of pamphlet of October 1, entitled "In the Beginning," read as follows :

In Cincinnati, at the outbreak of the War, we had quite a number of militia companies, mostly skeleton organizations, and effective only in name. Of the whole number, only six made their mark during the war. The Rover Guards furnished one company each to the 2d, 5th, and 137th regiments; the Zouaves one company each to the 2d, 5th and 137th regiments; the Highland Guards, a company composed entirely of citizens of Scottish birth or the direct descendants of such, and who gave to the service such fine officers as Colonels Patrick, Kilpatrick, Kirkup and Yerkes, recruited three companies for the 5th Ohio; the Continentals three companies for the 5th Ohio; the LaFayette Guards one company each for the 2d and 5th Ohio regiments, and the Guthrie Grays recruited the 6th Ohio Infantry.

IN THE BEGINNING,

— READ BEFORE THE —

OHIO COMMANDERY,

— OF THE —

Loyal Legion of the United States

OCTOBER 1, 1884

BY COMPANION

GEORGE M. FINCH,

LATE LIEUTENANT-COLONEL 137TH O. V. I.

Cincinnati:
PETER G. THOMSON,
1884.

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IN EXCHANGE
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IN THE BEGINNING.

The fifth day of October, 1860, is the initial point of the American Rebellion. Its conception, and probably its plans, lay much further back. On that day Governor Gist, of South Carolina, wrote a confidential circular-letter to the governors of what were commonly called the Cotton States, suggesting secession from the Union, as soon as it was ascertained that a majority of Lincoln electors were chosen at the then pending presidential election.

The morning of November 7th brought the certain news of the election of Lincoln and Hamlin on the previous day, and the rejoicings which would have been uttered throughout the South over their defeat, became jubilations, that their success offered the long-coveted pretext for disunion. The South Carolina Convention met December 17, 1860, and on the fourth day of its term passed unanimously what it called an "Ordinance of Secession." Conspiracy was not confined to South Carolina or the Cotton States; unfortunately, it had established itself in the highest official circles of the national administration. Three members of President Buchanan's Cabinet—Cobb, Floyd and Thompson—had become active and ardent disunionists. With their followers, they formed a central secession cabal in Washington City, to promote the success of the Southern Confederacy.

I know that there be angry spirits
And turbulent mutterers of stifled treason,
Who lurk in narrow places, and walk out
Muffled, to whisper curses to the night,—*Byron.*

NOTE.—The writer desires to acknowledge his indebtedness to Mr. Nicolay's valuable contribution to the "Campaigns of the Civil War."

December 24th the South Carolina representatives withdrew from the United States Congress, and Governor Pickens formally demanded that the President order the immediate withdrawal of all United States troops stationed in South Carolina.

On Christmas night, 1860, Fort Moultrie was evacuated, and Major Anderson's command removed to Fort Sumter. December 31st Senator Benjamin delivered his great secession speech, in the Senate, closing with the assertion "that the South could never be subjugated," and Senator Pryor, of Virginia, introduced in the Senate a resolution declaring "that any attempt to preserve the Union by force would be impracticable."

The same day the authorities of South Carolina seized all forts in Charleston Harbor, except Sumter, and took forcible possession of the United States revenue cutter "Aiken." January 3, 1861, all the United States forts in Georgia and Alabama were seized by the State authorities. One southern State after another formally seceded from the Union. January 9th the steamer "Star of the West" attempted to enter Charleston Harbor to re-inforce and provision Fort Sumter, but was fired upon by batteries erected on Morris Island, and, being hulled twice, was forced to abandon the effort and put to sea.

Outrage upon outrage, and insult upon insult were heaped upon the Federal Government, and not a blow struck in return.

Oh, for a tongue to curse the slave,
Whose treason, like a deadly blight,
Comes o'er the councils of the brave,
And blasts them in their hour of might.—*Moore.*

The politicians were tinkering, and trying to patch up the old Ship of State with compromises, while the nation was being strangled by its enemies. As late as February 16th, Harper's *Weekly* began an editorial on compromise, with these words, "We trust that our southern friends," etc. February 4th, at the invitation of Virginia, a Peace-Conference, of which ex-President Tyler was chosen chair-

man, met in Washington City, to “draft a scheme of adjustment,” etc. February 9th Jeff. Davis was elected president of the southern confederacy, by the southern Congress, assembled at Montgomery, Alabama. March 9th a prominent Republican newspaper, published in New York City, had a leading editorial upon “Compromise and reconciliation.”

During all these days and nights of humiliation and feverish excitement, I can only recall one act on the part of a leading official, that let a ray of sunshine shine in on the hearts of patient, long-suffering and patriotic Americans, who almost despaired of the upholding of the power and dignity of the great Nation, by their representatives in the Capital.

On the 29th of January, 1861, the following telegram was sent from Washington City by General John A. Dix, Secretary of the Treasury :

WILLIAM HEMPHILL JONES, New Orleans:—

Tell Lieutenant Caldwell to arrest Captain Brushwood, assume command of the cutter “McClelland,” and obey the order I gave through you. If Captain Brushwood, after arrest, undertakes to interfere with the command of the cutter, Lieutenant Caldwell is to consider him as a mutineer, and treat him accordingly. If any one attempts to haul down the American flag, shoot him on the spot.

JOHN A. DIX, Secretary of the Treasury.

The assault upon Fort Sumter had, doubtless, been ordered by the rebel government, under the hope, if not the belief, that it would not provoke immediate nor widespread civil war. The South well knew that the frontier could not be entirely stripped of regular troops; they assumed, or so pretended, that existing laws authorized no call of the militia. Potent public voices had declared that the North would neither entertain nor permit a policy of subjugation.

January 6, 1860, ex-President Pierce — Buchanan’s predecessor—wrote, “Without discussing the question of right, of abstract power, to secede, I have never believed that actual disruption of the Union can occur without bloodshed; and if, through the madness of Northern Abolitionism, that dire calamity must come, the fighting will not be

along Mason's and Dixon's line merely ; it will be within our own borders ; in our own streets ; between the two classes of citizens to whom I have referred. Those who defy law and scout constitutional obligations will, if we ever reach the arbitrament of arms, find occupation enough at home."

It even appeared that the spirit of secession was finding a lodgment in the North. A well-known and prominent politician in Ohio said, in a public speech, "That no soldiers of the North should coerce their fellow-citizens of the South, without first marching over his dead body." Others urged that the "wayward sisters be allowed to depart in peace." The firing on Sumter cleared up the political atmosphere as if by magic. Incredulity was changed to fact. There was no longer room to doubt. This was no riot. The conspiracy had given way to revolution. The news of the assault on Sumter reached Washington on Saturday, April 13th. On Sunday morning, the 14th, the President and Cabinet were met to discuss the surrender and evacuation. Lincoln, with his own hand, immediately drafted his proclamation calling for seventy-five thousand militia for the defense of the National Capital, and it was telegraphed and published to the country on Monday, April 15th. The whole country seemed to awake as from a feverish dream, and perplexed counsel faded from the public mind. Parties vanished from politics, and from every Governor of the free States came a prompt response to the President's call for militia. Previous to this time, but little attention or encouragement had been given to the organization of the militia, especially in the West. As for the regular army, I quote from a leading New York newspaper of February 23, 1861 :

"OUR ARMY AND NAVY."

"Europe is laughing pretty heartily at our army and navy arrangements in this country. They say that the late Lord Ellesmere, who proclaimed that the United States was the most war-like nation in the world, must have been

a wag. Of late, it must be admitted, these departments of our Government have not shown to advantage. Of our army, which numbers nearly 15,000 effective men, not 1,000 could be rallied by the Lieutenant-General commanding for the defense of Washington. Then, the arms of our troops are far from being equal to those of European soldiers. With all the bravery in the world, an American regiment could not stand against an English or a French regiment, simply because the latter are so much better armed."

In Cincinnati, at the outbreak of the war, we had quite a number of militia companies, mostly skeleton organizations, and effective only in name. Of the whole number only five made their mark during the war. The Rover Guards furnished one company each to the 2d, 5th, and 137th Ohio regiments; the Zouaves, one company each to the 2d and 137th regiments; the Continentals recruited the 5th Ohio; and the Guthrie Grays, the 6th Ohio and one company to the 137th regiment; the La Fayette Guards, one company to the 2d regiment.

The writer, then but a boy of seventeen, had, several years before, enlisted in the oldest and one of the most famous of the companies named, the old Rover Guards,—so named in honor of Fenimore Cooper's hero of the sea. The uniform was modeled after that of the English Grenadier Guards, bear-skin shakos, scarlet coat and pants, faced and trimmed with buff, blue and gold.

The *esprit du corps* was high, and in those *ante-bellum* days their fame went far and wide. Their excursions were many, and their entertainment of visiting soldiery regal in luxury and magnificence. No civic procession was complete without the "Red Rovers" marched at its head; their drill and soldierly bearing were voted perfection, and they were victors "on many a bloodless field." No one of us cares to admit that he is growing old, but when we refer to scenes "before the war," in which we took a manly part, we must admit that we are on the downhill side of life; but I hope never to live to that age that

memory will fail me, and I be unable to recall those halcyon days of youth, when first I followed the “wry-necked fife and ear-splitting drum,” and marched in the ranks of the Rovers.

Nearly thirty years ago, in the uniform of my company, I marched with my comrades into this very hotel to attend a banquet given in honor of Washington’s birthday. I can well remember, as if but yesterday, the gallant soldier sitting at the head of the table. As straight as an arrow, “bearded like a pard,” with magnetic voice and graceful dignity, he was “every inch a soldier,” and one born to command. As he spoke in response to the first toast, his witching eloquence captured his auditors, and filled my boyish soul with military ambition.

He alluded to Cuba as “the little black-eyed, coy damsel, waiting, with outstretched arms, to fall like a ripe peach into the embrace of lusty Uncle Sam,” and predicted a speedy war with Spain.

He was no prophet, for the war with Spain came not, but in less than five years the giants North and South had locked arms in a deadly struggle, that could only end with the exhaustion of one or the other, and the brave and gallant Lytle, the Chevalier Bayard of our red-coated corps, *sans peur et sans reproche*, had given his best heart’s blood for his country, and his bones lay bleaching on the bloody battle-field of Chickamauga.

* * * * *

When, on that bright spring morning, the 15th of April, 1861, the President’s proclamation and call for seventy-five thousand volunteers for the defense of the National Capital came flashing over the wires, the “Old Rovers” showed their mettle. Before daybreak, on the morning of the 17th, in but little over forty hours, they bade friends and homes good-bye, perchance forever, and with fife and drum, playing “The Girl I Left Behind Me,” marched briskly to where duty called. It is doubtful if any other militia company in the country furnished so many capable

officers for the Federal armies during the rebellion. In its ranks once served Generals Lytle, Bates, Parry, Kennett, and Sargent. Colonels Neff, John Kennett, Cross, Bosley, Burdsal, Littler, Bown, and Finch. Majors Symmes, Wallace, Parry, and Gaul. Captains Saunders, DeBus, Startzman, Paver, Swift, Bown, Lord, Young, Calvert, and Chamberlain. Lieutenants Athearn, Young, Irwin, Burton, Whelpley, Moonert, Powell, and Flenner. The company reached Columbus before noon on the 17th, where their identity as the "Red Rovers" became merged into plain and democratic Co. A, 2d Reg. Ohio Infantry. With their comrades of the 1st and 2d Regiments, they left the State the same evening, and such was the celerity of their movements, they reached Harrisburg, Pa., the same day the Massachusetts Sixth was mobbed in the streets of Baltimore. Being at that time unarmed, we were halted at Harrisburg to be uniformed and equipped, and in a few days, under the command of that accomplished soldier, Gen. Alexander McDowell McCook, we followed the march of the 6th Massachusetts through Baltimore City, and went into a camp of instruction in the suburbs of Washington.

* * * * *

In celebrating the attack and the fall of Sumter, at Montgomery, by a congratulatory speech, the rebel Secretary of War ventured to predict, that the Confederate flag would float over the Capital at Washington before the first of May. The authorities at the National Capital watched the development of the rebellion in the neighboring States of Virginia and Maryland with the keenest anxiety. There was great doubt as to the disposition and loyalty of the resident population; and the startling succession of disasters to the Union Cause created a profound impression. Virginia's secession on the 17th; Harper's Ferry lost on the 18th; Baltimore in arms, and the North effectually cut off on the 19th; the Gosport Navy Yard sacrificed on the 20th—where would the tide of misfortune stop? General Scott's chief reliance for the protection of the

Capital of the Nation, was on six companies of troops of the regular army, which he had concentrated from various parts of the country in driblets, among them being two light batteries of exceptionally good discipline and drill. The first substantial arrival of volunteer troops was by way of Annapolis, April 25th. Disembarking from the cars amid the welcome shouts of an assembled throng, and forming with all the ready precision of their holiday drill, they marched with exultant music and gaily fluttering banners up Pennsylvania Avenue to the Executive Mansion to receive the President's thankful salute. With their arrival, about noon of the 25th of April, all the gloom, and doubt, and feeling of danger to the Capital vanished. In comparison with uncomplaining endurance that trudged through the Yazoo Swamps, and the unflinching courage that faced the dreadful carnage of the Wilderness, later in the war, this march of the volunteers from Annapolis to the Junction, and rebuilding a few burned bridges, was the merest military picnic; but it has become historic, because it marked a turning-point in the national destiny, and signified the will of the people that the Capital of the Union should remain where George Washington planted it.

At two o'clock, on the morning of May 24th, three columns crossed the Potomac and entered on the "sacred soil" of the Old Dominion; three regiments by the Aqueduct at Georgetown; four regiments by the Long Bridge from Washington; and one regiment, Ellsworth's Zouaves, from their camp below the city, directly by steamer to Alexandria, the war steamer "Pawnee" being anchored off shore to protect the landing.

It had been a beautiful moonlight night, and who that took part in that night's march over the Long Bridge can ever forget, while memory holds its own, the feeling of solemnity that pervaded the entire column, as we marched in the pale moonlight. Where before jocund mirth and song, and noisy hilarity had enlivened the march, now all was hushed and quiet, expecting resistance at every step.

The crossing was speedily and safely made, and daylight found us in bivouac on the Alexandria and Loudon railroad, near Falls Church.

The whole enterprise seemed on the very point of a most successful conclusion, when sudden news of the assassination of Colonel Ellsworth, not only saddened the camps on both sides of the Potomac, but cast a new gloom, and spread a feeling of bitter vindictiveness throughout every loyal State. Colonel Ellsworth was a young man of twenty-four, who, by the possession of a phenomenal combination of genius, energy, and self-confidence, had won the admiration and attention of the whole country. As a matter of pastime, while studying law in Chicago, he had formed a company of about sixty youths, clerks and business employees, for military exercise. Into their instruction he threw such a degree of enthusiasm, such originality in remodelling and adapting old methods, such a grasp of purpose, and such a genius of control, that he formulated the bold project of an extended tour through the great cities of the North, to show that he had the best drilled company in the country. When they finally returned to Chicago, the name and fame of Ellsworth and his "Chicago Zouaves" were a part of the just interest and pride of the whole country.

The inauguration over, President Lincoln made Ellsworth a second lieutenant of cavalry in the regular army. Then came Sumter and the call for volunteers, and Ellsworth saw his opportunity. Hastening to the city of New York, he called a meeting and harangued the volunteer fire companies of the metropolis, and in three days enlisted a regiment of eleven hundred men, who chose him their colonel, and were mustered for three years.

It was at the head of this regiment that Colonel Ellsworth entered Alexandria at daylight of May 24th. The small force of rebels occupying the city escaped capture. Having seen the place securely occupied, and pickets posted to prevent surprise, Colonel Ellsworth remembered the rebel flag which for weeks had been flaunting an insulting

defiance to the National Capital. It was hoisted over the Marshall House, the principal hotel in Alexandria, and the Colonel was seized with the whim to take it down with his own hands—a foolish fancy, perhaps, when considered in cool judgment, but very natural to the heated enthusiasm of those early days of burning patriotic ardor. He mounted to the roof with one or two companions, cut the halyards, and started down with the treasonable emblem on his arm. The stairs were narrow and winding, and they could only descend in single file—a soldier preceded and followed him. As he reached the third step above the landing on the second floor, a side door flew open, and the owner of the house, a man named Jackson, who had been lurking there in concealment, like a tiger for his prey, sprang out, and leveling a double-barrelled shot-gun, discharged full into the Colonel's breast the fatal charge, driving almost into his very heart a gold presentation badge inscribed, "*Non nobis, sed pro patria.*"

Ellsworth fell forward in death without a groan; but the murder did not go unavenged, for in the same instant his assassin also expired by the double effect of a musket charge and a bayonet-thrust from Ellsworth's foremost companion.

Ellsworth was buried with imposing honors from the famous east room of the Executive Mansion, the President, Cabinet, and high officers of the Government attending as mourners; and as the telegraph filled the newspapers with details of the sad event, every household in the North felt as if the dark shadow of a funeral had lowered over its own hearthstone.

* * * * *

General Scott, Commander-in-Chief, was of the opinion that the Government ought not to engage in any offensive military movements with the three months' troops, whose term of service was rapidly approaching the end. These operations should only be undertaken with the new armies of the three years' volunteers, after giving the sum-

mer to drill and preparation. Important reasons, partly military and partly political, conflicted with so deliberate a programme. The highly excited patriotism of the North, eager to wipe out national insult, was impatient of what seemed tedious delay. The echoes of the Sumter bombardment were yet in the air; the blood on the Baltimore paving stones was crying loudly to Heaven. It saw rebellion enthroned in the Capital of Virginia; it saw a numerous Union army gathered at Washington; the newspapers raised the cry of "On to Richmond," and the popular heart beat in quick and well-nigh unanimous response to the slogan.

A detachment sent out from fortress Monroe by General Butler had met a repulse at Great Bethel, and near Vienna Station a railroad train, conveying the Ohio troops, had run into an ambush; both resulted in trifling losses, but were irritating to the pride of the North, and the fires of patriotic resentment once more blazed up with fresh intensity. It is no part of this paper to describe the Battle of Bull Run. Time will not permit. Suffice it to say, that it was a drawn battle, with, owing to a combination of circumstances, the substantial fruits of victory remaining with the Confederates.

Perhaps, the result of this battle was all for the best, as the loyal North, for the first time, appreciated the magnitude of the task they had before them in conquering the rebellion. The country realized that something more than familiarity with the manual of arms, and company and battalion drill, and with *books* on the Art of War, was required to make a good and effective soldier, and learned to be patient and to wait. The mission of the three months' volunteers was accomplished. The Capital was saved. They were publicly thanked, and mustered out; much the larger part of them reënlisted for three years. Many fine soldiers graduated from the 1st and 2d Ohio regiments. The names of Generals Alexander McD. McCook, Wm. L. McMillen, and Ben. D. Fearing. Colonels Len. A. Harris, E. A.

Parrott, Anson G. McCook, John Kell, E. C. Mason, John Frazee, and O. C. Maxwell. Majors Parry, Vandegrift, Hampson, and Stafford. Captains Baldwin, Paddock, Ensworth, Pease, Harrell, Saunders, and many others whose names I do not recall, are part of the military records of our country's history.

It is pleasant now, after the lapse of so many years, to recall the events of nearly a quarter of a century ago, and to realize, that after so much blood and so many millions of treasure were spent, the great rebellion was conquered at last, and that we can with the poet (Holmes) say :

“The good ship Union's voyage is o'er,
At anchor safe she swings,
And loud and clear with cheer on cheer
Her joyous welcome rings :
Hurrah! Hurrah! it shakes the wave,
It thunders on the shore,—
One flag, one land, one heart, one hand,
One Nation evermore!”



